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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000517

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SUBJECT: CHAD/SUDAN: DADJO BITTERNESS

REF: NDJAMENA 492

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Dadjo, probably the most populous tribe in Eastern Chad, have taken the brunt of Arab cross-border attacks and are, according to one of their leaders, angry toward Arabs on both sides of the border and also at the regime for leaving them unprotected. They could align with rebel leader Mahamat Nour, but only in the (unlikely) event he forswore the Arabs. Meanwhile, Nour remains planted on a sliver of Chadian (Dadjo) territory, after his victory March 30, while the Chadian armed forces are regrouping 30 miles away in Ade. Dadjo leaders are concerned that their people will not be able to return to their lands to plant before rains begin in May. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) DCM and poloff on April 4 met Yacine Bakhit Abdelkadir, nephew of the Sultan of the Dadjo in Goz Beida, leader of a small political party aligned with the ruling party, former Minister of Interior under Habre, and former special advisor to Deby. He said he was in daily telephonic contact with his brother, district chief in the Ade-Koloy border area, and his relatives in Goz Beida.

¶3. (SBU) Yacine confirmed that the Chadian armed forces, as widely believed, suffered a defeat at the hands of Mahamat Nour's rebel group on March 30. As indicated reftel, Mahamat Nour's RDL began occupying the now largely abandoned village of Modohyna (aka Modoyna, Madeina) four days before the battle, and moved westward across the trapezoid-shaped Chadian territory across the Wadi Kadja, occupying other largely abandoned villages. The RDL was equipped with 52 all-terrain vehicles, and had 1000 men. Mahamat Nour's force had moved into the area from Habilah, in Sudanese territory 20 miles east of Modohyna. The fighting on March 30 took place at or in the approaches to Modohyna. The region is relatively forested, and the rebels used forest cover to effect their ambush. The Chadian force lost more than 300 killed, including Deby's nephews General Abakar Youssouf Itno and Colonel Bahar Sinine. The survivors fled in disarray back to the subprefectural center, Ade, 30 miles to the west. The Chadian armed forces are reinforcing themselves there,

with the arrival of 200 all-terrain vehicles. Yacine's informants anticipate a repeat attack.

¶4. (SBU) Yacine said that the Dadjo had traditionally good relations with the Tama, the ethnic group (centered north of Adre) to which Mahamat Nour and most of his rebel group belong. There were some Dadjo in the RDL. The problem for the Dadjo was that Mahamat Nour had brought Arabs into his group and had aligned himself with the "janjaweed." Dadjos in the area had observed that mounted Arabs had followed the Toyota-wheeled RDL into Modohyna. Mounted Arabs had depopulated the trans-Kadja zone in January and February, and the janjaweed accompanying the RDL in its occupation of the zone beginning March 26 stripped whatever was left of food stores in the area. Yacine believed that Sudan had promoted this alignment of the Arabs with Mahamat Nour, wanting to put itself in a position to claim to the international community that the janjaweed came from Chad and were now at least partially based in Chad.

¶5. (SBU) In fact, Yacine said, there was a Chadian dimension to the janjaweed, both in the historical sense of Chadian Arabs who had displaced themselves in recent decades to Darfur, where it was greener and had been less violent than Chad, and in the sense of Arabs living still in Chad who had recently joined or cooperated with the Arabs in Darfur. There were, moreover, senior Arab figures in Ndjamena -- including several government ministers (Defense, Economy, Livestock) -- who Yacine identified as the Chadian Arabic "political leadership." The Dadjo had been particularly outraged in the wake of a large janjaweed attack on Modohyna in February, when the Chadian armed forces had staged their only reprisals and captured twelve janjaweed, among whom were four Arabs from the Nuwayba Jamul, a Chadian Arab nomadic group who had traditionally grazed in the trans-Kadja. The Dadjo were angry that these Chadian Arabs, who had lived

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among the Dadjo and migrated through the trans-Kadja for years, had now proved to be among their attackers. (ICRC recently confirmed that these "Chadian janjaweed" remained under "house arrest.") Yacine also cited the names of five Chadians who had fled to Darfur in the past year or two, joined the janjaweed, and now had been aligned to the RDL (by Sudan).

¶6. (SBU) Yacine said that the predominant Arab tribe in eastern Chad was the Mahariyya, traditionally centered in Arada and Abu Gudam, near Am-Dam, but with a large presence also in Darfur. A week previously, the shaykhs in Abu Gudam had proposed a meeting after the May 3 presidential election with the Sultan of the Dadjo in Goz Beida, to offer their apologies for the Arab attacks on the Dadjo. Yacine said that so far, the Dadjo notables were inclined to refuse to meet the Arab shaykhs. In recent years the Arabs had been progressively encroaching on their farmlands, with population increase and the drying up of the northern areas which were the Arabs' home base. Now had come the attacks of January and February, with proven Chadian participation. The Mahariyya had traditionally moved through the Dadjo terrain during the dry season October to May. Henceforward, the Arabs would not be welcome to return; if they did, they would be killed. Yacine predicted a civil war between the Dadjo and the Arabs.

¶7. (SBU) Yacine said that the Dadjo were now active purchasing arms and ammunition and had formed a militia with 500 men, including 180 soldiers from the Chadian armed forces. The Minister of Interior (Territorial Administration) had condemned these militias as outlaws and rebels. For purchase of arms, the Dadjo had been asked to make payments (women 5000 Sudanese dinars, men 10,000, merchants 50,000 - Sudanese dinars being the currency in use on both sides of the border, though not in Goz Beida itself). This militia had been present in the trans-Kadja when the RDL began moving into the area March 26. However, it did not

confront the RDL, but rather evacuated to Koloy on the other side of the Kadja. The point of this militia was to defend villagers against Arabs.

¶18. (SBU) Yacine said tht the Dadjo would sound out Mahamat Nour on his ntentions. The Dadjo wanted good relations with Mahamat Nour and might even align with him, but onl on condition that he clearly cut all relations ith Arabs. It was not clear to what extent Mahaat Nour was able to act independently from the gvernment of Sudan, which appeared to be forcing te RDL-Arab alignment. The Dadjo were bitter against Sudan. Increasingly, they were also bitter against the Chadian government. They now saw that they would get no help from the Chadian government. They had repeatedly requested help from the government to protect them from janjaweed depredations, but there had been very little response, except the one pursuit of the janjaweed by the armed forces in February. The government had concentrated on protecting the area to the north, especially the Zaghawa area. There had been no janjaweed attacks on anyone but the Dadjo (and Masalit), who had caused no problems to anyone and were the most numerous ethnic group in eastern Chad (also with a large presence in Darfur). Yacine said that he would be traveling to the Dar Sila (the region based in Goz Beida, with 70 percent Dadjo population) in three days with a Dadjo delegation; although he headed a political party that was formally allied with the MPS, he would not help the regime to turn out the vote for Deby, nor did he expect the Dadjo would vote for him.

¶19. (SBU) Yacine said he did not have exact figures on numbers of IDPs, but he thought that the ICRC probably had as accurate figures as existed. He said (as indicated by the ICRC) that there had been an up-and-down trend of IDPs moving from the border to the greater safety of Goz Beida. Some of these IDPs were slipping into refugee camps. The fighting on March 30 did not appear to have spurred a great jump in the trend of movement to Goz Beida, but he would soon get more specific information. Further fighting could change the

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picture considerably. Yacine was worried about the IDPs, because the rains would start as early as May and people needed to get back to their farms for planting. Even if they were able to get back to their farms, they would have difficulty feeding themselves until the harvest in October, because the janjaweed had destroyed their food stocks and livestock.

¶10. (SBU) Asked whether there was a Libyan role in instability along the border, Yacine said that he was informed that a delegation of Chadian Arabs had recently gone to Tripoli seeking Qadhafi's assistance. There was concern among the Dadjo that Qadhafi's promise to pay for a 3000-man force to patrol the border was a ploy to ensure Arab domination over the area.

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